

UNHAPPY WANDERERS

STRUGGLE FOR A POINT

St. Albans City 1,
Wycombe Wanderers 1

WYCOMBE. Wanderers' struggle to reach their best form continues. On Tuesday night at Clarence Park, they did enough to gain a share of the Isthmian League points, but it was an unconvincing performance and can have done little to boost their confidence for tomorrow's (Saturday) trip to Tooting in the F.A. Cup.

On Saturday Tooting won 2-1 at St. Albans and with gates down after Wycombe's early exit from the Cup at Maidenhead last term, the Blues will be anxious for a good run in this year's competition.

Wanderers brought back Tony Horseman, leading scorer at the club for many years, into their side in a bid to step up goalscoring but predictably Bodger had a quiet return, not yet fully match fit. One hopes he will soon be striking up his old partnership with Keith Searle, who is fast approaching top form.

In the air, Keith has been virtually unassailable in the

past two weeks, cleverly flicking the ball on for his fellow front runners. As yet they have been unable to capitalise on his work.

NOT AS STRONG

Still, a 1-1 draw and a point at St. Albans will probably satisfy Wycombe manager Brian Lee, who has yet to win at St. Albans in his four year stay with the club. But the Saints, who had previously given away 15 goals in seven matches were not as strong as in recent years.

They included Geoff Anthony and Bernie Bremer on Tuesday, two former Loakes Park men. Bremer, whose long range shooting won him many friends at Wycombe, did not trouble John Maskell but Welsh International Geoff Anthony, al-

though outplayed in the air, gave both Delaney and Olsen problems with his turn of speed.

But it was coloured winger Dennis Gill who proved the most elusive. The towering Olsen was often beaten for pace and gave away half a dozen free kicks in a bid to stop the flying number 11. Gill's strong running opened up a new threat to the Blues defence too.

Goalkeeper John Maskell was forced to dive at Anthony's feet early on when Olsen was beaten but after 13 minutes Searle blazed a good chance over the bar when well clear. With centre half Les Burgess constantly penalised for fouls on Searle, Wycombe began to take the edge and after 29 minutes Amos had the ball in the back of the net but the score was disallowed by referee Smith, presumably for offside.

Just when a Wycombe goal seemed on the cards, the Saints took the lead with a well taken

goal by Gill. A good piece of running by Bill Ratty and a cross to the far post saw Gill nip in between the two Wycombe centre backs, dive forward and send his header into the far corner. Maskell palmed the ball onto the post but couldn't prevent it entering the net.

Ray Bloxham brought a first half punctuated by referee Smith's over used whistle, to a close, with a flying save to halt a Searle header.

Bill Ratty was unlucky to be booked early on in the second period and just after Maskell had produced a reflex save from Anthony's header, Wanderers equalised.

Horseman outjumped the home defence and flicked the ball on for Tony Amos who put Searle through straight down the middle. The centre forward ran on well and prodded the ball past Bloxham for his first goal in six matches, to go joint top of the Wycombe scoring charts alongside John Delaney with four.

Gill spurned a good chance by firing the ball just over the Wycombe crossbar in the 61st minute, and with the Saints using the flanks skilfully, Wycombe went through some anxious moments during the latter stages.

After 80 minutes Alan Gane came on for the tiring Tony Horseman. Tony Amos's deflected drive brought a good save from Bloxham at the foot of a post but St. Albans sub McGillicuddy replied with a similar long-range effort that had Maskell struggling.

Throughout the half, Wycombe's football deteriorated. They allowed basic errors to creep into their play. Too much bunching, playing the ball too close and mis-directed passes frustrated their efforts time and again.

Saturday's F.A. Cup hurdle at Sandy Lane looked increasingly large after Tuesday's performance yet Wycombe are too talented to stay in this rut for long.

S.E.

ST. ALBANS: R. Bloxham, D. Hogwood, R. Grant, M. Howkins, L. Burgess, D. Neville, A. Brothers, W. Ratty, G. Anthony, B. Bremer, D. Gill (sub P. McGillicuddy 83 mins.).

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell, I. Rundle, D. Gamblin, G. Olsen, J. Delaney, R. Williams, A. Amos, L. Pritchard, J. Hutchinson, K. Searle, A. Horseman (sub A. Gane 80 mins.).

REFEREE: D. Smith (Hornchurch).

Half time 0-1; Goalscorers — St. Albans Gill (35), Wycombe, Searle (57).